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VOLUME XXV, No. 26

MONDAY, MAY 16, 1932

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THE AUTOCRAT AND HORACE

Critics of Oliver Wendell Holmes are likely often to find themselves thinking of Horace¹. There is evidently an affinity between Horace, the *Musarum sacerdos* (Carmina 3.1.3) and Holmes, the high priest of the Brahmin cult, for the critics, in writing of Holmes, do not confine themselves to Horatian commonplaces of literary criticism. As Morse, his biographer and near relation, says (the italics are mine)²,

It may be justly said that Horace had not any very different kind of genius and inspiration from that of Dr. Holmes, of however much rarer quality these may have been in the Roman.

A critic³, writing an appreciation of Holmes's work on the centennial of his birth, declares that the despair, in writing about him as in writing about Horace, is to know when to stop quoting.

Another critic, in an unsigned appreciation of him, uses, though in a perverted sense, and of a quite different class of persons, Horace's characterization of himself as 'a hog from the sty of Epicurus'⁴. Edward Everett Hale, in discussing Holmes's methods of poetical composition, makes use of Horace's phrase, 'care, and the file'⁵. Apparently the kinship between Holmes and Horace is not restricted to a not unexpected agreement in matters literary.

In his writings, Holmes bears ample testimony to the sympathy between himself and the Roman poet. This is especially noticeable in his correspondence with John O. Sargent, the translator of Horace, though the evidence is by no means confined to any part of his works.

I am so glad that you stick to your Horace.... The

¹Holmes's poems are cited from The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Cambridge Edition (1895. Pp. xxi + 352). <Poetical Works>.—Here, and in the rest of this note, words in angular brackets give the formulas by which, to save space, references to Holmes's works will be made.

²Holmes's prose writings are cited from the Riverside Edition of his works, in eleven volumes. References are made to eight of these volumes, as follows:

1. The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table (1891. Pp. xii + 321). <The Autocrat>.
2. The Professor at the Breakfast Table (1891. Pp. x + 332). <The Professor>.
3. The Poet at the Breakfast Table (1891. Pp. viii + 360). <The Poet>.
4. Over the Teacups (1891. Pp. ii + 349). <Over the Teacups>.
5. Elsie Venner (1891. Pp. xvi + 487). <Elsie Venner>.
6. The Guardian Angel (1895. Pp. xvi + 431). <The Guardian Angel>.
7. A Mortal Antipathy (1895. Pp. vii + 307). <A Mortal Antipathy>.
8. Pages from an Old Volume of Life (1899. Pp. vi + 433). <Pages>.
11. Ralph Waldo Emerson: John Lothrop Motley.—Two Memoirs (1906. Pp. ix + 542). <Emerson>.

All these volumes were published by Houghton Mifflin and Company (now Houghton Mifflin Company).

The references are in all cases to pages. The translations of Horace are from Professor H. R. Fairclough's version of the Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica of Horace (1926). <For a notice of this volume of The Loeb Classical Library see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 21.25-26, 126, 126-127. C. K.>.

⁴John Torrey Morse, Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1.230. (Two volumes. Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1896).—This work is cited in the notes, below, simply as Morse.

⁵W. G. Ballantine, Oliver Wendell Holmes, North American Review 190 (1909), 185. The italics are mine.

⁶An Appreciation of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Independent 67, 554 (September 2, 1909).

⁷Edward Everett Hale, Memories of a Hundred Years, Outlook 72.311-312 (October 4, 1902).

fact is, you have lived in Horace so intimately and so long that you have got his flavor into your very marrow, and feel and talk just as that grand Roman gentleman did.... I wish I had become as familiar with some classical author as you are with Horace. There is nothing like one of those perennial old fellows for good old gentlemanly reading; and for wit and wisdom, what is there to compare with the writings of Horace⁶.

I have been reading the Ode *Justum et tenacem* carefully, and your translation and commentary.... I shall catch your Horatio-mania, I am afraid⁷.

I... took down my Horace, found that you had got him neatly and accurately, and envied you for the moment your vital familiarity with that Roman gentleman, who said so many wise and charming things with such concinnity as is to be found nowhere else that I know of⁸.

Elsewhere he writes thus of Sargent⁹:

Give him an ode of Horace, or a scrap from the Greek Anthology, and he would recite it with great inflation of spirits....

... I know no reader more to be envied than that friend of mine who for many years has given his days and nights to the loving study of Horace¹⁰....

Of Dudley Venner, Holmes says¹¹:

... He loved to warm his pulses with Homer and calm them down with Horace....

Holmes and Horace have certain well-defined common characteristics. Both showed facility in producing occasional verse; if Horace was the laureate of Rome, Holmes was the laureate of Boston. Neither man can be divorced in thought from a small geographical area: yet neither considered himself restricted in space. Horace seldom went far from Rome, but Rome was the center of the Empire; Holmes for various reasons did not often venture far from Boston, but he had coined the expression that Boston is the hub of the universe. There is also a certain similarity in the attitude of the two men toward life. Horace was an eclectic philosopher, and Holmes a Unitarian who permitted himself some latitude of range in religious thought. Again, the two men used similar mediums for expressing their ideas. Both wrote lyrics; and the informal table-talk of the Breakfast Table Series is not radically different from the Roman *satura* as modified and developed by Horace. Both the Breakfast Table Series and the *satura* are works unrestricted in subject, not exhaustive in discussion, lively in expression, in form tending from dialogue more and more to monologue as one interlocutor monopolizes the conversation. Finally, the satire of each writer, though keen and incisive, is kindly, and seldom leaves a venomous sting.

Probably the most noticeable Horatian phrase in Holmes's writings is *Non omnis moriar*, with which he often couples the words *monumentum aere perennius*, of

⁸Morse, 2.311-312 (see note 1a, above). Compare also 2.302.

⁹Morse, 2.312. The ode referred to is Carmina 3.3.

¹⁰Morse, 2.80. ¹¹The Guardian Angel, 203.

¹²Over the Teacups, 157. Compare 158; The Poet, 213.

¹³Elsie Venner, 279. Compare A Mortal Antipathy, 156.

the same ode¹¹. He made no secret of his desire for praise; his detractors asserted, and his friends to some extent admitted, that this desire fell little short of vanity. We find him saying¹²

... *Non omnis moriar* is a pleasant thought to one who has loved his poor little planet....

Another passage of Horace of which Holmes often reminds us is that passage in which the Roman poet describes how he is pointed out by the finger of the passer-by (*monstror digito*) as the master of the Roman lyre. Holmes refers to "the pleasure Horatian of digitmonstration", and "the monster-digit (to hint a classical allusion)", as sources of real pleasure to him¹³.

Related to Holmes's desire for praise was his pride of social position as a member of what he had named the Brahmin caste of New England. His aristocratic tendencies clashed with his democratic principles. Here also Horace was his stay. Note this statement¹⁴:

And Horace was a heathen sinner—was he?—for saying, *Odi ignobile <sic> vulgus*.

More seriously, he admits¹⁵:

... Educated and refined persons must recognize frequent internal conflicts between the *Homo sum* of Terence and the *Odi profanum vulgus* of Horace....

In addition to a number of Horatian tags scattered throughout Holmes's works¹⁶, mention should be made of several references to Horace which are of somewhat greater importance. Holmes speaks¹⁷ with approbation of "the epigrammatic saying of Horace, *Ira furor brevis est*". In his reminiscences, he remarks¹⁸,

... I wish I could have better remembered the *nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri* of Horace....

The first four verses of Horace, Epodes 15, are quoted as a specimen of excellent writing; three lines from the *Ars Poetica* play a forceful part in a scene of The Guardian Angel; two verses of Epode 13 are woven into a poem¹⁹. The following references to Horace should be noted.

It is pleasant to be foolish at the right time, said the divinity student....²⁰

A life with tranquil comfort blest,
The young man's health, the rich man's plenty....²¹

A whiter soul, a fairer mind....
We may not look on earth to find²².

... the death-defying will....²³

... where our martyrs are lying,
Pleading in vain for a handful of earth²⁴.

¹¹Carmina 3.30.

¹²Over the Teacups, 305. Compare The Poet, 160-161; Harvard College Anniversary Poem (Poetical Works, 277-283); The Autocrat, 10; Dedication of the Halleck Monument (Poetical Works, 214-216); Elsie Venner, 215; Morse, 2.152; The Poet, 144.

¹³Carmina 4.3.22; A Familiar Letter (Poetical Works, 233); The Guardian Angel, 321.

¹⁴Morse, 2.259. ¹⁵Carmina 3.1.1; Over the Teacups, 223.

¹⁶Compare, for example, the following: Nil admirari (Epistulae 1.6.1); Credat Hahnemannus (a perversion of Sermones 1.5.100); caelum, non animum (Epistulae 1.11.27); vestigia quinque retrorsum (a perversion of Epistulae 1.1.74-75); de te fabula narratur (Sermones 1.1.70); laudatores temporis acti (Ars Poetica 173); labuntur anni (Carmina 2.14.2).

¹⁷Crime and Automatism (Pages, 335); Epistulae 1.2.62.

¹⁸Morse, 1.91; Epistulae 1.1.14.

¹⁹The Autocrat, 105; The Guardian Angel, 58; Ars Poetica 169-171; Epodes 13.4-5; Ad Amicos (Poetical Works, 137).

²⁰The Autocrat, 229; Carmina 4.12.28.

²¹Ad Amicos (Poetical Works, 137); Carmina 1.31.

²²In Memory of John and Robert Ware (Poetical Works, 212); Sermones 1.5.40-42.

²³A Rhymed Lesson (Poetical Works, 45); Carmina 3.3.1.

²⁴Never or Now (Poetical Works, 193); Carmina 1.28, *passim*.

... that knock of the other visitor whose naked knuckles rap at every door²⁵.

Who would have thought that the saucy question, "Does your mother know you're out?" was the very same that Horace addressed to the bore who attacked him in the Via Sacra?²⁶

... Achilles was little better than a Choctaw brave. I won't quote Horace's line which characterizes him so admirably, for I will take it for granted that you all know it....²⁷

The poem Contentment (Poetical Works, 157-158) is a reminiscence of Carmina 1.31; the poem for the dedication of the fountain at Stratford-on-Avon (Poetical Works, 291-292) is a reminiscence of the ode to the Fountain of Bandusia (Carmina 3.13). These *disiecta membra* are mentioned to show how frequently and in what ways Holmes used the works of Horace, and how familiar he was with the 'purple patches' of the Roman poet.

In literary criticism Holmes naturally shows his greatest dependence upon Horace. Possibly he made the acquaintance of Horatian criticism through the medium of the English writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries²⁸; he certainly knew Pope's Essay on Criticism, and Byron's English Bards and Scottish Reviewers. There can be no doubt, however, that he had studied Horace's criticism long and carefully, and that he made extensive use of it. Furthermore, the *Ars Poetica*, with its apparent lack of method, its informality, and its frequent touches of humor, was the sort of pleasant reading that would attract a wit like Holmes more than a dry, formal dissertation on matters pertaining to literary criticism. Such a treatise as Horace's, "crowded with lines worn smooth as old sesterces by constant quotation"²⁹, a literary gem in itself, could not but be dear to his heart. Besides, the principles advocated by Horace were the same as those so ardently preached by the high-priest of the Brahmins.

Let us now consider these principles in detail.

Holmes agrees with Horace that the poet is an especially endowed person who has worked long and faithfully to develop his faculties. In reply to the age-old question concerning the source of poetic power, Horace says³⁰:

Often it is asked whether a praiseworthy poem be due to Nature or to art. For my part, I do not see of what avail is either study, when not enriched by Nature's vein, or native wit, if untrained; so truly does each claim the other's aid, and make with it a friendly league....

Holmes in one of his novels mentions the "strange, divine, dread gift of genius"³¹. In one of his letters he writes³²:

The instinct, perhaps as you say inherited, for writ-

²⁵The Poet, 159; Carmina 1.4.13.

²⁶The Poet, 323; Sermones 1.9.26-28.

²⁷Over the Teacups, 74. The reference is, probably, to Sermones 1.7.9-13. <Holmes was here writing from memory, loosely; there is no single line of Horace that fits Holmes's words. To my thinking, Carmina 2.4.2-4 Prius insolentem serva Briseis niveo colore movit Achillem... comes closest to Holmes's language. Yet insolentem here is not unreservedly condemnatory. In no other passage does Horace unreservedly condemn Achilles. Holmes erred here. C. K.>

²⁸Brander Matthews, in A Short History of American Literature, in his chapter on Holmes mentions Steele (178).

²⁹In Emerson, 243-244 Holmes thus describes the *Ars Poetica*.

³⁰Ars Poetica 408-411. Compare Sermones 1.4.43-44.

³¹The Guardian Angel, 100.

³²Morse, 1.343. Compare 1.39; Poetry (Poetical Works, 15-25).

ing verse needs long training and study before it can produce rhymes that can be called poetry.

The endowment may even be productive of harm:

...I consider the Muse the most dangerous of sirens to a young man who has his way to make in the world....

For a divine instinct, such as drives the goose southward and the poet heavenward, is a hard thing to manage and proves too strong for many whom it possesses³².

Horace, in mock-serious vein, also mentions this danger, as well as its cure³³.

Because Democritus believes that native talent is a greater boon than wretched art, and shuts out from Helicon poets in their sober senses, a goodly number take no pains to pare their nails or to shave their beards; they haunt lonely places and shun the baths—for surely one will win the esteem and name of poet if he never entrusts to the barber a head that three Anticyras cannot cure. Ah, fool that I am, who purge me of my bile as the season of spring comes on! Not another man would compose better poems. Yet it's not worth while <to write poetry and lose your wits>.

This training which the poet must follow Horace compares to that which the youth undergoes who desires to become an athlete; it is no children's game.

...He who in the race-course craves to reach the longed-for goal, has borne much and done much as a boy, has sweated and shivered, has kept aloof from wine and women....³⁴

...You must shun the wicked Siren, Sloth, or be content to drop whatever honour you have gained in nobler hours....³⁵

In a letter Holmes writes almost an echo of this passage³⁷.

It costs sweat; it costs nerve-fat; it costs phosphorus, to do anything worth doing.

In his published works he develops this sentiment³⁸.

Every poem that is worthy of the name, no matter how easily it seems to be written, represents a great amount of vital force expended at some time or other.

I tell you this writing of verses means business,—It makes the brain whirl in a vortex of dizziness; You think they are scrawled in the languor of laziness,—

I tell you they're squeezed by a spasm of craziness^{39a}.

Horace takes pains to designate the most important parts of the poet's training. Its end is clearness and accuracy of vision, both physical and mental. Horace laughs at the painter who produces monstrosities on canvas, but he considers equally ridiculous the writer whose poems lack clarity and sense. Holmes agrees with him³⁹.

The one thing that marks the true artist is a clear perception and a firm, bold hand, in distinction from that imperfect mental vision and uncertain touch which give us the feeble pictures and the lumpy statues of mere artisans on canvas or in stone. A true artist, therefore, can hardly fail to have a sharp, well-defined mental physiognomy.

The artist must also be able to express in words what he has clearly seen. To this end he must become

a student of language. About words Horace has much to say. To him the poet is arbiter of language⁴⁰.

...He will have the courage, if words fall short in dignity, lack weight, or be deemed unworthy of rank, to remove them from their place, albeit they are loth to withdraw.... Terms long lost in darkness the good poet will unearth for the people's use and bring into the light—picturesque terms which, though once spoken by a Cato and a Cethegus of old, now lie low through unseemly neglect and dreary age. New ones he will adopt which Use has fathered and brought forth. Strong and clear, and truly like a crystal river, he will pour forth wealth and bless Latium with richness of speech; he will prune down rankness of growth, smooth with wholesome refinement what is rough, sweep away what lacks force—wear the look of being at play, and yet be on the rack....

...My aim shall be poetry, so moulded from the familiar that anybody may hope for the same success, may sweat much and yet toil in vain when attempting the same: such is the power of order and connexion, such the beauty that may crown the commonplace⁴¹.

Holmes, like Horace, was an eager and persistent student of language. His library was well-stocked with dictionaries and works of reference which were in constant use. His letters contain discussions of the significance of rare or obsolete words⁴². Language, to him a solemn thing⁴³, owes much to poets⁴⁴.

So every grace that plastic language knows
To nameless poets its perfection owes.
The rough-hewn words to simplest thoughts confined
Were cut and polished in their nicer mind....
He who reads right will rarely look upon
A better poet than his lexicon!

In his appreciation of Longfellow, he says⁴⁵:

There is...no affected archaism, rarely any liberty taken with language.

The poet must also be an assiduous student of meter. Horace sketches briefly the meters and their proper uses, and declares that no one who is ignorant of poetic forms has any right to the name of poet. Holmes, like Horace, was a master of meter. As his biographer says⁴⁶,

...he could take any form of rhyme ever devised by song-makers, and render perfect music with it.... He played with measures with...light natural mastery.

Schroeder says⁴⁷:

Among Holmes's positive poetic qualities is a metrical propriety which invariably convinces.

Holmes defended Longfellow in his choice of meter for his *Song of Hiawatha*, which the critics had found objectionable, and concluded his defense with the words⁴⁸:

The poet knows better than his critics the length of step which best befits his Muse.

Evidently Holmes considered a knowledge of meters and judgment in their use part of the necessary equip-

³²Over the Teacups, 50; The Professor, 241.

³³Ars Poetica 295-304. ³⁴Ars Poetica 412-414.

³⁵Sermones 2.3.14-16. ³⁶Morse, 1.331.

³⁷The Poet, 97.

³⁸At the "Atlantic" Dinner (Poetical Works, 228).

³⁹The Professor, 221-222; Ars Poetica 1-9.

⁴⁰Epistulae 2.2.111-125.

⁴¹Ars Poetica 240-243. Compare 46-72. ⁴²Morse, 2.17-20.

⁴³The Professor, 43. ⁴⁴Poetry (Poetical Works, 23-24).

⁴⁵Samuel Longfellow, H. W. Longfellow—Final Memorials, 360 (Boston, Ticknor and Company, 1887. Pp. vii + 447).

⁴⁶Morse, 1.228; Ars Poetica 73-98.

⁴⁷W. L. Schroeder, Oliver Wendell Holmes, 47.

⁴⁸Longfellow, 366 (see note 45, above). Compare 361: "In this most frequently criticized composition the poet has shown a subtle sense of the requirements of his simple story of a primitive race, in choosing the most fluid of measures, that lets the thought run through it in easy sing-song...."

ment of every poet, an idea which Horace had emphasized.

Clarity of vision and power of expression are not the sole objects in the poet's education. In addition to the technical side, the formal education, there is also the material education. "With all thy getting, get understanding". But, in order to attain to understanding the poet must first have knowledge from two sources: from books, and from men. The studies are to be undertaken in the order mentioned; the implication in Horace, and the assertion in Holmes, is that the second is the more important. From the former the poet will learn universal truth, from the latter its application to individual cases⁴⁹. Says Holmes⁵⁰:

The most assiduous study of the best models is one of the preparations for success.

For Horace these models were Greek, for Holmes primarily English of the eighteenth century. Holmes remarks⁵¹:

... Society is a strong solution of books. It draws the virtue out of what is best worth reading, as hot water draws the strength of tea-leaves. ... I always believed in life rather than in books. I suppose every day of earth, with its hundred thousand deaths and something more of births—with its loves and hates, its triumphs and defeats, has more of humanity in it than all the books that were ever written, put together. ... O little fool, that has published a little book full of little poems or other spluttering tokens of an uneasy condition, how I love you for the one soft nerve of special sensibility that runs through your exiguous organism. ... But if you don't leave your spun-sugar confectionery business once in a while, and come out among lusty men... you will come to think that the spun-sugar business is the chief end of man. ...⁵²

Having finished his course, the artist is now ready to select his subject. Here, too, Holmes repeats Horace's precept that the poet should examine himself, and find his capacities. It may be added that Holmes practiced this introspection in nearly all his writings. Note this statement⁵³:

Take a subject, ye writers, equal to your strength; and ponder long what your shoulders refuse, and what they are able to bear. Whoever shall choose a theme within his range, neither speech will fail him, nor clearness of order.

Holmes warns against mistaking "an ordinary human gift for a special and extraordinary endowment"⁵⁴; he urges the writer to talk about subjects that have been long in his mind⁵⁵. Concerning the kind of subject to be employed, both writers are emphatic in stating that an artist shows his skill fully as well in giving his own version of a known theme as in attempting something hitherto unheard of. This advice, be it understood, is for beginners in the art, and is not intended to restrict experienced writers.

It is hard to treat in your own way what is common; and more properly are you spinning into acts a song of Troy than if, for the first time, you were giving to the world a theme unknown and unsung. In ground open to all you will win private rights, if you do not linger along the easy and open pathway, if you do

not seek to render word for word as a slavish translator. ...⁵⁶

It was in his <Longfellow's> choice of subjects that one source of the public favor with which his writings... were received obviously lay. A poem, to be widely popular, must deal with thoughts and emotions that belong to common, not to exceptional character, conditions, interests⁵⁷.

What can justify one in addressing himself to the general public as if it were his private correspondent? There are at least three sufficient reasons: First, if he has a story to tell that everybody wants to hear. ... Secondly, if he can put in words any common experiences not already well told, so that readers will say, "Why, yes! I have had that sensation, thought, emotion, a hundred times, but I never heard it spoken of before, and I never saw any mention of it in print"; and thirdly, anything one likes, provided he can tell it so as to make it interesting⁵⁸.

This problem of originality is a vexing question for the author. Holmes and Horace solve it by asserting that originality consists, not in the subject selected, but in the treatment of it. Mark Twain, having unwittingly used as original a dedication identical with one of Holmes's, wrote to him in great contrition, and received the reply⁵⁹ that

there was no crime in unconscious plagiarism; that I committed it every day, that he committed it every day. ... that no happy phrase of ours is ever quite original with us. ...^{60a}

Of less serious cases Holmes says⁶⁰:

... A thought is often original, though you have uttered it a hundred times. It has come to you over a new route, by a new and express train of associations.

You need not get up a rebellion against what I say, if you find everything in my sayings is not absolutely new. ...

Even after he has chosen a suitable subject, the poet cannot sit down and produce his work without further delay. The finished product will not come to his pen at once⁶¹.

Often must you turn your pen to erase, if you hope to write something worth reading. ... Condemn a poem which many a day and many a blot has not restrained and refined ten times over to the test of the close-cut nail.

This precept Holmes found correct in his own experience. Of a poem he wrote to a friend⁶²:

Like everything tolerable I ever wrote, it was conceived in exultation and brought forth with pain and labor. ... I somewhat labor in literary parturition.

Of his methods of composition his biographer writes⁶³:

Very accurate and painstaking was he concerning the literary finish of his works. He wrote a simple, what may be called a gentlemanlike style, and of great purity, but crowded with allusions. ...

Not even yet has Horace exhausted his repertoire of directions for the young writer; and Holmes keeps pace

⁴⁹For the three quotations see *Ars Poetica* 128-134.

⁵⁰Longfellow, 361 (see note 45, above).

⁵¹Holmes, *A Mortal Antipathy*, 12.

⁵²Mark Twain's *Autobiography*, 1.241 (Two Volumes. New York, Harper and Brothers, 1924. Pp. xvi + 368; 365).

⁵³Decidedly pertinent here is a passage in Terence. In the Prologue to the *Eunuchus* (19-41) Terence is defending himself against the charge of plagiarism. The final point of his defense is presented in 40-41: Denique nullumst iam dictum quod non sit dictum prius. In 42-43 he adds: Qua re aequomst vos cognoscere atque ignoscere, quae veteres factitarunt si faciunt novi. C. K. >.

⁵⁴The Autocrat, 7, 51. Compare Over the Teacups, 9, 105.

⁵⁵Sermoes 1.10.72-73; *Ars Poetica* 291-294.

⁵⁶Morse, 2.269-270; 1.147. ⁵⁷Morse, 2.16.

⁴⁹*Ars Poetica* 309-318. ⁵⁰Morse, 1.342.

⁵¹The Autocrat, 62, 134. Compare The Guardian Angel, 174.

⁵²The Poet, 103-104.

⁵³*Ars Poetica* 38-41. Compare Carmina 1.6; 1.26; 4.2.27-32; 4.15.1-4. ⁵⁴The Poet, 155. ⁵⁵The Autocrat, 134.

with him. No matter how fine the writing, the work is a failure, unless it shows genuine feeling⁶⁴.

Not enough is it for poems to have beauty: they must have charm, and lead the hearer's soul where they will. As men's faces smile on those who smile, so they respond to those who weep. If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself: then... will your misfortunes hurt me: if the words you utter are ill suited, I shall laugh or fall asleep....

Holmes's greatest charm was his sincerity of feeling, portrayed in all his works. John Burroughs, no admirer of his, after Holmes's death wrote⁶⁵:

He had that gift that makes literature—something direct and intimate—his mind touched yours.

Holmes himself expresses the idea thus⁶⁶:

...if there is anything that gives one a title to that name < = poet >, it is that his inner nature is naked and is not ashamed....

Who cares that his verse is a beggar in art
If you see through its rags the full throb of his heart?

A poem that is an artistic expression of sincere feeling will not fail of success.

But the poet is not yet free from his pedagogue.

When the poet has done his best, and the finished work lies before him, sober judgment tells him that he has come far short of his ideal⁶⁷.

Most of us poets...deceive ourselves by the semblance of truth. Striving to be brief, I become obscure. Aiming at smoothness, I fail in force and fire. One promising grandeur, is bombastic; another, over-cautious and fearful of the gale, creeps along the ground....

These regrets are echoed by Holmes. He laments that no line that he has written has been on a level with his conceptions⁶⁸.

...to none is granted to reveal

In perfect semblance all that each may feel....

In this connection Holmes paraphrases a verse of the *Ars Poetica*: "Mountains have labored and have brought forth mice"⁶⁹. The fear of mediocrity, which he in common with Horace condemns, is before him⁷⁰. ...only some things rightly brook the medium and the bearable. A lawyer and pleader of middling rank falls short of the merit of eloquent Messalla, and knows not as much as Aulus Cascellius, yet he has a value. But that poets be of middling rank, neither men nor gods nor booksellers ever brooked....

...Mediocrity is as much forbidden to the poet in our days as it was in those of Horace, and the immense majority of the verses written are stamped with hopeless mediocrity.

It < = the reading public > knows what it wants, at any rate, and pounces upon every new aspirant, who shows any mark of genius, with carnivorous avidity. The editors all want him, the public wants him—and he is soon dragged from obscurity. But both are intolerant of mediocrity, or at least indifferent to it.

⁶⁴*Ars Poetica* 99-104.

⁶⁵C. Barrus, *Life and Letters of John Burroughs*, 1.348 (Two volumes. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925).

⁶⁶The Poet, 11; An Impromptu (*Poetical Works*, 115). Compare Address for The Opening of the Fifth Avenue Theatre (*Poetical Works*, 216-218); The Autocrat, 60; Over the Teacups, 5; For Class Meeting (*Poetical Works*, 136).

⁶⁷*Ars Poetica* 24-28.

⁶⁸Poetry (*Poetical Works*, 17).

⁶⁹Compare Rip Van Winkle, M. D. (*Poetical Works*, 64). In *Holmes Ars Poetica* 139, the verbs are in the future tense. Compare Morse, 1.147.

⁷⁰*Ars Poetica* 369-373; Over the Teacups, 313; Morse, 1.344-345.

For both poets, however, the impossibility of attaining their ideal is no deterrent to their best efforts.

Why does the poet write poetry? The answer is twofold: first, because he cannot refrain from it, and, secondly, because he has a purpose to serve by writing. Says Horace⁷¹:

But you will say and do nothing against Minerva's will < *invita Minerva* >; such is your judgment, such your good sense....

Holmes knows the phrase, and approves the statement⁷².

When one of the ancient poets found he was trying to grind out verses which came unwillingly, he said he was writing *invita Minerva*.

Horace and his pupil Holmes assert also the positive view of the question⁷³.

...whether peaceful age awaits me, or Death hovers round with sable wings, rich or poor, in Rome, or, if chance so bid, in exile, whatever the colour of my life, write I must.

Here are verses that in spite
Of myself I needs must write.

When you write in prose, you say what you mean. When you write in rhyme, you say what you must.

What do you think, Sir,—said the divinity-student,—opens the minds of poets most fully?

Why, there must be the internal force and the external stimulus. Neither is enough by itself....

There are, says Horace, three possible purposes which an author may have in writing: to instruct, to give pleasure, or to give pleasure combined with profit. Of these, the last is most likely to please the most persons⁷⁴.

Poets aim either to benefit, or to amuse, or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life. Whenever you instruct, be brief...He has won every vote who has blended profit and pleasure, at once delighting and instructing the reader....

...what is to prevent one from telling truth as he laughs, even as teachers sometimes give cookies to children to coax them into learning their A B C...?

Again, he speaks of "a poem, whose birth and creation are for the soul's delight..."⁷⁵ The charge has been made that the didactic strain in Holmes's writings is too pronounced; W. D. Howells remarks⁷⁶:

I think they < = the New England writers > felt their vocation as prophets too much for their good as poets.

It is enough for us to note that the didactic strain is no more pronounced in the Breakfast Table Series than it is in the *Sermones* and the *Epistulae* of Horace, and that Holmes's practice, as also his theory, was not at variance with the theory and practice of Horace. Holmes writes⁷⁷ of

...the poets, who look at things mainly for their beauty or their symbolic uses.

It is not necessary that a poem should carry a moral, any more than that a picture of a Madonna should

⁷¹*Ars Poetica* 385-386.

⁷²Over the Teacups, 314; *Ars Poetica* 385. Compare The Autocrat, 248.

⁷³*Sermones* 2.1.57-60; Programme, October 7, 1874 (*Poetical Works*, 185); Over the Teacups, 42, 79; The Autocrat, 182, 191. Compare Morse, 1.227, 2.303-304.

⁷⁴*Ars Poetica* 333-344; *Sermones* 1.1.24-26.

⁷⁵*Ars Poetica* 377.

⁷⁶Literary Friends and Acquaintance, 117 (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1901. Pp. ix + 288).

⁷⁷The Seasons (Pages, 133); Longfellow, 364 (see note 45, above).

always be an altar-piece. The poet is himself the best judge of that in each particular case.

The mingling of *utile* with *dulce* is, however, in his opinion the best sort of writing⁷⁸.

Shall we think less of our poet because he so frequently aimed in his verse not simply to please, but also to impress some elevating thought on the minds of his readers?

...What nobler tasks has the poet than to exalt the idea of manhood, and to make the world we live in more beautiful?

His biographer writes⁷⁹:

...he was in fact a writer with very grave and serious purposes.... Nothing would have humiliated him more than to be regarded as a writer whose chief object, or at least principal achievement, had been the entertainment of his readers.

On the thorny problem of publication, Holmes gives as his dictum a paraphrase of the advice of Horace⁸⁰:

If they <= young poets> would only study and take to heart Horace's *Ars Poetica*, said the Professor, it would be a great benefit to them and to the world at large. I would not advise you to follow him too literally, of course, for, as you will see, the changes that have taken place since his time would make some of his precepts useless and some dangerous, but the spirit of them is always instructive. This is the way, somewhat modernized and accompanied by my running commentary, in which he counsels a young poet.

"Don't try to write poetry, my boy, when you are not in the mood for doing it,—when it goes against the grain. You are a fellow of sense,—you understand all that.

If you have written anything which you think well of, show it to Mr. —, the well-known critic; to 'the governor', as you call him,—your honored father; and to me, your friend."

To the critic is well enough, if you like to be overhauled and put out of conceit with yourself; but I wouldn't go to 'the governor' with my verses, if I were you. For either he will think what you have written is something wonderful, almost as good as he could have written himself,—in fact, he always *did* believe in hereditary genius,—or he will pooh-pooh the whole rhyming nonsense, and tell you that you had a great deal better stick to your business, and leave all the word-jingling to Mother Goose and her followers.

"Show me your verses," says Horace. Very good it was in him, and mighty encouraging the first counsel he gives! "Keep your poem to yourself for some eight or ten years; you will have time to look it over, to correct it and make it fit to present to the public."

"Much obliged for your advice," says the poor poet, thirsting for a draught of fame, and offered a handful of dust. And off he hurries to the printer, to be sure that his poem comes out in the next number of the magazine he writes for.

Holmes of course understands that Horace merely sought to emphasize the need of caution in publishing. No one had a greater dislike than Holmes of voluminous writers, whom he described, in Horace's phrase, as writing *stans pede in uno*⁸¹. Such writers he warns⁸², again in the words of Horace: *nescit vox missa reverti*.

⁷⁸Longfellow, 364 (see note 45, above); Over the Teacups, 49.

⁷⁹Morse, 2, 29.

⁸⁰Over the Teacups, 89-90. Compare The Autocrat, 101-104.

⁸¹Sermones 1.4.10; The Poet, 318. Compare Sermones 1.4.11-13; Over the Teacups, 77-81, 84-87. <For two recent discussions of this expression, by Dr. Moses Hadas and myself, see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 21.114, and note 4 (February 6, 1928). C. K.>.

⁸²Ars Poetica 390; Verses from the Oldest Portfolio (Poetical Works, 321).

Mrs. Fields recorded in her journal that she once heard him say⁸³:

...Most men write too much. I would rather risk my future fame upon one lyric than upon ten volumes. But I have said Boston is the hub of the universe. I will rest upon that....

For the critics of his day, who were not always the well-meaning, unbiassed judges praised by Horace, Holmes had little love. His ideal critic, against whom Holmes raised no objections, Horace describes in the following words⁸⁴:

...An honest and sensible man will censure lifeless lines, he will find fault with harsh ones; if they are graceless, he will draw his pen across and smear them with a black stroke; he will cut away pretentious ornament; he will force you to flood the obscure with light, will convict the doubtful phrase, will mark what should be changed, will prove an Aristarchus. He will not say, "Why should I give offence to a friend about trifles?" These trifles will bring that friend into serious trouble, if once he has been laughed down and given an unlucky reception.

Yet faults there are which we can gladly pardon; for the string does not always yield the sound which hand and heart intend, but when you call for a flat often returns you a sharp; nor will the bow always hit whatever mark it threatens. But when the beauties in a poem are more in number, I shall not take offence at a few blots which a careless hand has let drop, or human frailty has failed to avert....the poet who often defaults becomes, methinks, another Choerilus, whose one or two good lines cause laughter and surprise; and yet I also feel aggrieved, whenever good Homer "nods," but when a work is long, a drowsy flood may well creep over it.

This sort of critic found in Holmes an eager and interested listener.

Holmes was ready to accept criticism....He was always pleased in conversation, by any intelligent criticism as to what he had written⁸⁵.

Holmes does, however, complain⁸⁶ that

...A sharp criticism with a drop of witty venom in it stings a young author almost to death, and makes an old one uncomfortable to no purpose....

Lowell he considers the type of a good critic⁸⁷:

He is the critic who is first to mark
The star of genius when its glimmering spark
First pricks the sky, not waiting to proclaim
Its coming glory till it bursts in flame.

A reference to one of Horace's canons of criticism appears in Holmes's panegyric of Longfellow⁸⁸.

Not, of course, that every single poem reached the standard of the highest among them all. That could not be in Homer's time, and mortals must occasionally nod now as then.

In the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table occurs the expression of another rule⁸⁹: "Neither make too much of flaws and occasional overstatements".

Finally, Holmes borrows Horace's description of the difficulty of securing unbiassed criticism⁹⁰:

Like the crier, who gathers a crowd to the auction of

⁸³M. A. D. Howe, Dr. Holmes, the Friend and Neighbor, in The Yale Review 7.375 (April, 1918).

⁸⁴Ars Poetica 445-450, 347-360.

⁸⁵E. E. Hale, Oliver Wendell Holmes, in The Review of Reviews 10.497, 500 (November, 1804).

⁸⁶The Poet, 152.

⁸⁷To James Russell Lowell (Poetical Works, 294).

⁸⁸Longfellow, 359 (see note 45, above).

⁸⁹The Autocrat, 51. Compare The Poet, 159.

⁹⁰Ars Poetica 419-425.

his wares, so the poet bids flatterers flock to the call of gain, if he is rich in lands, and rich in moneys put out at interest. But if he be one who can fitly serve a dainty dinner, and be surety for a poor man of little credit, or can rescue one entangled in gloomy suits-at-law, I shall wonder if the happy fellow will be able to distinguish between a false and a true friend.

With this compare Holmes²¹:

What do I think determines the set of phrases <of praise or blame> a man gets?—Well, I should say a set of influences something like these:—1st. Relationships, political, religious, social, domestic. 2nd. Oysters; in the form of suppers given to gentlemen connected with criticism....

Holmes had a whimsical fancy that Dr. Johnson, the lexicographer, who was born one hundred years before him, lived a life to which his own was mystically parallel. He used to enjoy comparing the passing years of his own existence with Boswell's account of Johnson's life, and he felt lost when his life exceeded the span of Johnson's and the record was at an end. With some justice, he might also have compared many aspects of his outlook on life and letters with the works of Horace, for the influence upon his life of the Roman poet, philosopher, wit, and critic was profound.

WASHINGTON AND JEFFERSON COLLEGE,
WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

JOHN PAUL PRITCHARD

REVIEW

Greek and Roman Bronzes. By Winifred Lamb. Pp. xxiii + 261. 96 Plates and 37 Illustrations in the Text. London, Methuen and Company; New York, Lincoln MacVeagh, The Dial Press (1929). 25 shillings.

Miss Lamb's book, *Greek and Roman Bronzes*, has been enthusiastically received by students of Greek and Roman plastic art, partly because a good book is always welcome, partly because this particular work fills a gap in the available accounts of ancient art that is difficult to fill otherwise. The author is extremely well fitted for the task that she has undertaken; she is Keeper of the Greek and Roman Department of Antiquities at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and she is also one of the most distinguished of British women archaeologists and excavators.

The compiler of a handbook of this sort is obliged to confine himself or herself within very definite limits. Miss Lamb has seen fit to exclude all bronzes of whatever sort that are over a meter in height; but she treats, along with statuettes, bronze reliefs, engravings, and bronze vases. Apart from the vases, all utilitarian material is omitted. We hope that Miss Lamb may presently have opportunity to complete her work on

bronzes by the publication of full accounts of what is here lacking.

It need surprise no one to observe other notable omissions. Nothing is said about the technological processes of the craftsmen, while many well-known statuettes are conspicuously absent from the book. This merely goes to prove the great range of the subject. Small bronze works are extremely numerous. Though the volume before us is a stout one, and the author possesses the gift of condensation in style, a good deal regarding the topics that are included has been left unsaid.

There is great difficulty involved in the correct classification of ancient bronzes. The student is unassisted by the literary tradition that attends sculpture on a larger scale. The provenance of most pieces is uncertain or unknown. The difficulty is increased by the occurrence of the great trade in these small works of art that prevailed in antiquity. Miss Lamb follows the thoroughly sound method of establishing small groups of bronzes and bringing them into something like a definite chronological and topographical relation. There is some guess work in Miss Lamb's book, as is unavoidable; but on the whole the method works out very well.

The book is finely, but not sumptuously, illustrated. Some 270 pieces are shown in the Plates, and the discussions of the text involve a total of over 700 items. Amidst this great mass of detail slips are inevitable. I have noticed about twenty that are purely typographical or are faulty cross-references. The following slightly more serious mistakes or oversights may be noted. On page 127, for "One isolated mirror..." read "One isolated mirror stand..."; on page 137, for "horses" read "Pegasoi"; on page 227, note 1, for "Osiris" read "Horus". Miss Lamb's desire to accomplish extreme brevity leads in a few instances (notably 169, 181) to complete obscurity.

The work as a whole is well constructed; it is clear in diction; it exploits no elaborate theories or academic fads. *Greek and Roman Bronzes* is doubtless destined to serve for a good many years to come as the standard handbook in the field that it exploits. It forms a very valuable addition to the series of works on archaeology that is being brought out by Methuen and Company, under the direction of A. B. Cook (in the United States by Mr. Lincoln MacVeagh, The Dial Press).

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

A. D. FRASER

CLASSICAL ARTICLES IN NON-CLASSICAL PERIODICALS

VIII

Revue de L'Histoire des Religions—July-October, La Règle de Saint Benoit et la Legislation de Justinien, P. Collinet.

Review Historique—November-December, La Sépulture de Pierre, Ch. Guignebert; Review, favorable, by Jean-Rémy Palanque, of G. Contenau and V. Chapot, *L'Art Antique*; Review, uncritical, by A. Merlin of Yale Classical Studies, Volume II; Review,

²¹Compare *The Autocrat*, 114-115.

²²The contents of the book are as follows: Preface (vii-x); Note on the Spelling of Greek Words and Place-names (xi); Contents (xiii-xiv); List of Illustrations in the Text (xv-xvi); List of Plates at the End of the Book (xvii-xxi); Abbreviations (xxii-xxiii); I. The Prehistoric Period (1-29); II. The Sub-Mycenaean, Transitional and Geometric Periods (30-52); III. The Early Archaic (Orientalizing) Period, c. 700-575 B. C. (53-80); IV. The Sixth Century: Statuettes (81-111); V. The Sixth Century: Decorative Work and Utensils in Bronze (112-140); VI. The Earlier Fifth Century (141-166); VII. The Later Fifth and the Fourth Century (167-194); VIII. The Hellenistic Period, or the Hellenistic Tradition (195-215); IX. Roman Bronzes (216-246); Subject Index (247-256); Museum Index (257-261).

generally favorable, by A. Grenier, of Arturo Solari, Vita Publica e Privata degli Etruschi.

Saturday Review (London)—October 24, Education: Scientific or Classical?, Harold Stannard and W. H. Jacque [two opposing points of view]; January 2, Review, generally favorable, by Vernon Rendall, of J. F. D'Alton, Roman Literary Theory and Criticism: A Study in Tendencies; January 9, Review, generally favorable, by Osbert Burdett, of G. Lowes Dickinson, Plato and His Dialogues.

Saturday Review of Literature—February 20, Review, generally favorable, by Clarence Mendell, of George P. Baker, Justinian; Review, favorable, J. P. Harland, of Hetty Goldman, Excavations of Eutresis in Boeotia; March 5, Review, generally favorable, by Arthur Colton, of G. Lowes Dickinson, Plato and His Dialogues.

School and Society—February 6, Amount of High School Latin as an Indicator of Success in College Work, Edward L. Clark ["In conclusion we may say that these data indicate that the amount of Latin taken in high school is the only language <sic> which shows any traceable relationship with the quality of college work done during the first year and that, in this group at least, a knowledge of the amount of high-school Latin is of little value for forecasting college success"]; February 27, A Moral Equivalent for the Classics, Roscoe Pullam [for the generality, argues the author, study of the ancient languages *per se* should be abandoned in favor of translations; "the time now given to a miserably poor mastery of the tools should be devoted to a study of the vital content of the classics in English translations.... The ultimate solution, of course, will be the complete elimination of the older subjects in their present character. When this change is complete, the substitute for the classics will take the form of an attempt to introduce the pupil to the high and lucid thought of all ages, without any long and largely fruitless struggle with the languages in which that thought happened to be first expressed"].

Scientia—Volume 51 (1932), No. 1, Platone e la Teoria della Scienza, F. Enriques e G. Diaz de Santillana; Sur les Effets des Changements de Langue, A. Meillet.

Scientific Monthly—March, The Diuturnal Use of Perfumes and Cosmetics, Grace M. Ziegler [an interesting discussion of the extensive use of cosmetics in all ages, with particular reference to the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Thirteen illustrations accompany the text].

Spectator—January 9, Short review, unfavorable, anonymous, of Eli E. Burriss, Taboo, Magic, Spirits; January 30, Short review, generally favorable, anonymous, of Hanns Sachs, Caligula (translated by Hedvig Singer).

Yale Review—Spring, Review, favorable, by H. T. Perry, of Allardyce Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT

JOHN W. SPAETH, JR.

GENERALS AND SPANISH POETS

In the oration for the poet Archias, §20, Cicero says that Themistocles, when asked *quod acroama aut cuius vocem libentissime audiret*, answered, *eius a quo sua virtus optime praedicaretur*.

The excellence of the poetry might be less important than the subject matter, as is shown by some of the instances that Cicero quotes (20-26) of great generals who enjoyed hearing their own praises sung. He mentions (26) Metellus Pius's pleasure in hearing the Spanish poets of his day who sung his praises: *qui praesertim usque eo de suis rebus scribi cuperet ut etiam Cordubae poetis pingue quiddam sonantibus atque peregrinum tamen aures suas dederet*.

A parallel to the case of Metellus Pius may be found in a passage in the life of the Duke of Wellington by Philip Guedalla (Wellington. New York and Boston. Harper and Brothers, 1931; see page 221): "... he was apt to call without undue modesty for the song made in his honor by the Spanish after Salamanca.... Wellington sat listening with composure to the lift and wail of the *copla*. Indeed, they noticed that he 'hears his own praises in Spanish with considerable coolness'; and someone termed the song 'Lord Wellington's favorite'".

MACMURRAY COLLEGE,
JACKSONVILLE, ILLINOIS

MARY JOHNSTON

LAME SMITHS AND BLIND POETS

The lameness of Hephaestus, god of smiths, is illustrated in the familiar scene at the end of Iliad 1, where he arouses the laughter of the gods by acting as cup-bearer in spite of his limp. The story of his all-day fall from heaven (1.590-594) is no doubt an aetiological myth invented to explain his lameness. So the lame Wayland Smith of northern mythology is said to have been hamstrung. Similarly poets in primitive societies are blind. Besides 'blind Thamyris and blind Maeonides', and Demodocus in the Odyssey, there are the Scotch Blind Harry, and the blind fiddler of Scott's Redgauntlet, who was probably taken from life. For Thamyris we have (Iliad 2. 599) a myth to explain his blindness.

It is of course obvious that the myths put the cart before the horse. The god of smiths was lame because human smiths were lame, and they were lame because anyone who was not crippled would find some other occupation. So no one but a blind man who could not help himself would take up minstrelsy and poetry, which might be no better than beggary. There is an impressive illustration of these facts in a letter from China that appears in The Atlantic Monthly 149. 393 (April, 1932). In speaking of a family of farmers the writer says:

"One of them was born with a club foot and was apprenticed to a smith. He has forged farm tools in his home hamlet for thirty years and is now teaching his trade to a nine-year-old nephew who was shot in the hip last year by marauding soldiers. Another, who was stung blind by bees, was apprenticed to the Minstrel of the City of the Third Dike".

HAVERFORD COLLEGE

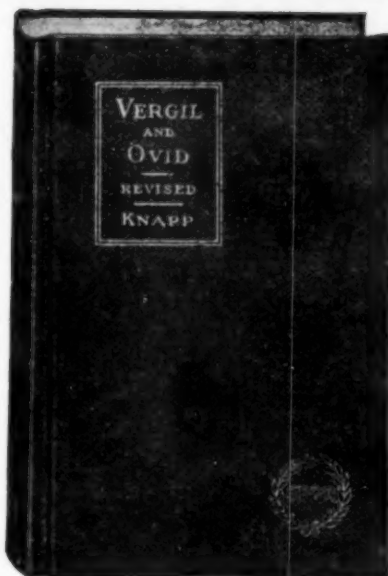
L. A. POST

A CORRECTION

In Professor Crum's article, THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 25.153, column 2, there is a slight error. He writes: "... The soldiers... called Tiberius *Biberius*, Claudius *Caldius*, and Nero *Mero*..." Suetonius, Tiberius 42, which he cites, clearly refers only to the second Emperor, who was called *Biberius Caldus Mero* instead of Tiberius Claudius Nero.

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By THELMA B. DE GRAFF, PH.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	iii
General Introduction.....	ix-x
Chapter I. Aeneas the Roman.....	1-15
Chapter II. The Dido-Aeneas Romance..	16-40
Chapter III. The Fastigia Rerum in the Life of Naevius.....	41-57
Chapter IV. Some Remarks on Naevius as Poet and as Man.....	58-66
Commentary on Naevius, Bellum Puni- cum, Fragments 1-7.....	67-92
List of Abbreviations: Bibliography.....	92-95

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